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APPLICATION OF FLEXIBLE WORKING CONDITIONS IN SOUTH BOHEMIAN SMEs OPERATING IN SERVICE SECTOR

Čarvašová, A.

Abstract

Provide information on the use of flexibility tools in flexible working arrangements implemented especially as a benefit for employees. Find out to what extent these flexibility tools are used by the small and medium-sized employers in the region of South Bohemia, in which the employers use the tools more often, whether the use of tools corresponds to the offer of specific forms of flexibility and whether the more tools used by the employer, the more flexible jobs are offered. Find out whether the use of specific tools for flexibility depends on the characteristics of the managers. The results of the research should be used by the organisations which try to increase the number of flexible jobs in South Bohemia (i. g. non-profit organisations helping mothers and people with handicap at the labour market, the social departments of regional authorities, the unions) and HR departments in SMEs looking for qualified employees. These stakeholders of research results get information with the potential to train managers and help them with implementing FWA into personal strategies of the organisations.

The research confirms that the more flexibility tools are used by the employers, the more flexible jobs are available at the employees. The most common flexibility tool under the flexible working arrangements is the “responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term”. It was also found that some tools are often used by managers with specific characteristics, e.g. the tools of direct control of employees are most often used by the managers who are the oldest siblings. Flexibility instruments in the form of mandatory participation in regular meetings (needed for building team atmosphere and for sharing common ideas and goals), are more often used by the employers who have more active experience of part-time employment than those who offer work from home and flexible working hours. The use of the largest number of flexibility tools is reported in relation to work from home. In contrast, allowing flexible working hours does not show a statistically significant dependence on any of the flexibility tools in the analysis. Next result of the statistical analysis is related to the finding

that mandatory participation in meetings, in which the employee is given tasks to complete until the next meeting, does not show a statistical dependence on work from home and flexible working hours.

Key words: Flexible working conditions, Job Sharing, Part time, Home office, Telework, Employees.

JEL classification: J21, L20, M10

1. Introduction

1.1 Terminology and legislation

The term “flexible working arrangements” (FWA) is not defined by Czech legislation. The terminology used in the paper is based on the Government Strategy for Equality between Men and Women in the Czech Republic for 2014 - 2020, in which the FWA means mainly part-time work, flexible working hours and working from home (Úřad Vlády ČR, 2014). The job sharing and the compressed week are forms of FWA which in this research are included into part-time (job sharing) and flexible working (compressed week).

By Act No. 262/2006, part-time work is defined as shorter working hours. Flexible working hours are defined by the legislation as flexible schedule in relation to work. By the above-mentioned Act, work from home is specified according to the place of work. Therefore, Czech legislation does not prohibit any form of FWA. There are mentions in the media about complications in the implementation of work from home with regard to ensuring safety and health at work (Kotíková et al., 2020). However, the law allows for a precise definition of the place of work so that it is also possible to comply with the requirements for ensuring safety and health at work. The last amendment of Act No. 262/2006, in force from the January 2021 adjusts the rules for job sharing.

1.2 Literature Research

Flexible Working Conditions

Estes (2004) describes the benefits of flexible jobs for workers. In particular, it is easier to reconcile family care and employment. This motivates mothers to remain in the labour market. In the US where low state support is provided, only 68% of mothers of pre-school children remain on the labour market. In contrast, in Sweden, where the government programme supports flexible employment contracts financially, 86% of mothers of pre-school children stay in the labour market. If there is state support for flexible working, the women are more likely to work in more influential positions, earn more money and have more influence at work and at home. Without the existence of FWC state support, women prefer staying at home to take care of the family and get financial support from their husbands. The flexible working

arrangements state support system is not set up in the Czech Republic. In the area of family policy, state support is mainly focused on supporting the parental leave.

According to Eurostat data (2019), women with a child under 6 years of age showed an employment rate of 70.5% in the Czech Republic in 2018, while in Sweden the same group of women had an employment rate of 87.1%, in Slovenia it was 87.6% and 84.1% in the Netherlands. The average employment rate of this group of women in the EU-28 was 75.7% in 2018, with only Italy (69%), Hungary (64.9%), Slovakia (64.3%), Montenegro (61.4%), North Macedonia (57.0%), and Serbia (68.3%), Turkey (57.4%) showing lower employment rates for this group of women than the Czech Republic.

As reported by the survey among almost ten thousand employees working in communication services in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Spain, 89% of the respondents believe that FWA should become a regular form of work and 54% of them would change jobs if given the opportunity to achieve a better balance between work and leisure (Hunter, 2018).

Those interested in FWA, especially for shorter working hours, are largely represented by a group of parents caring for children, i.e. by mostly by the women in the Czech Republic. Those interested in FWA also include people with disabilities, students and retired people (Šťastná, 2005).

Especially in periods of low unemployment, such groups of the population are a source of possible labour force.

In this research we focus on the implementation of FWA as a bonus for employees who prefer FWA and for employers as a business case worth considering, regarding the potential for increased productivity and sustainability (Australian Institut of Management NSW & ACT Training Centre, 2012). This research is not focused on the implementation FWA as a obligation given by the Government or as a solution of a complicated situation by the employer (lack of contracts, pandemic, Industry 4.0, ...). Kroupa et al. (2020) show the economic ineffectivity of obligatory implementation FWA. It means the voluntarily and non-entitlement is important in this research.

If an SME tries to implement FWA as a non entitlement bonus for employees into its human resources architecture it is needed to establish some flexibility tools. This paper focuses on using nine flexibility tools which can help to implement FWA. All the flexibility tools focused

in this research were selected according to recommendation of Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center for Work (2018) and of the findings of professional literature:

1. remote internet access to the complete information system (autonomy);
2. remote internet access only to certain parts of the information system, as needed by the employee (autonomy);
3. company mobile phone (autonomy);
4. the employee's obligation to answer all work-related telephone calls and e-mails no later than an internally set deadline (supervision);
5. responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term (autonomy);
6. the obligation to regularly submit an overview of the activities that the employee engaged in during the work activity (supervision);
7. the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period following the next meeting (autonomy, supervision);
8. mandatory time that the employee must spend at workplace discussing information to the colleagues who substitute for the employee during their absence from the workplace (supervision);
9. mandatory supervisory meetings with the superior, during which it is checked whether the employee continuously performs the tasks (supervision).

The nine above-mentioned flexibility tools were offered to the respondents of the questionnaire survey to choose from. In addition, they had the opportunity to list other tools they use for managing FWA. However, no other tools were mentioned by the respondents.

The use of the **first three flexibility tools** was supported by the statements from next academic articles. Rice, R.E. (2017) observes: "Most flexwork would be impossible without the use of ICTs." Pikhart (2020) compares the development of electronic communication in the global enterprises and in the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Czech Republic between 2013 and 2018. He states that in 5 years, there was a sharp increase in electronic communication in all the enterprises. A significant increase in the use of smart phones, laptops and tablets was found in super-global enterprises. However, the employees of the SMEs refused to use the mobile devices other than smart phones in 2018. Pikhart (2017) states that the employees receive dozens and hundreds of e-mails a day needed to be processed. They

complain about a flood of information where the quantity exceeds the quality. There is a need to start training towards effective information transfer (Pikhart 2017). At the same time, it is necessary to realize that the way of leading employees with flexible working arrangements, leading to further congestion by e-mail communication, is not suitable. Bergum (2009) deals with managerial communication at a distance and defines telework as „working tasks carried out at a geographical distance from the office, supported by ICT and often by a formal agreement“.By the Bergum's research, the manager engages 60 - 80% of their time in communication, with face-to-face communication predominating. However, telework requires an increase in the share of communication via electronic media at the expense of face-to-face personal communication.

The fourth and sixth flexibility tool focused in this research was selected as a follow-up to the Lott (2019) who observes it as a tool for managing FWA. Lott states that the regulation of time to answer e-mails and time to be on the phone can help to manage the home-office as same as to record the timetable during a day can help to manage employee working on FWAs.

Sulaymonov, A. (2020) states that there should be a supervisor who helps to coordinate flexible workplace activities and who is ready for the questions that in reduced hours what work need to be done. Sulaymonov, A. (2020) warns about the necessity to coordinate communication between the job sharers which was reflected in **the eighth researched flexibility tool**.

CIPD (2021) and Australian Institut of Management (2012) recommend the entrepreneurs implementing FWA to ensure effective communication of tasks and task-related communication which is taken into consideration in **the seventh and ninth flexibility tool**. Raina, Roebuck (2016) state that it is very important that the managers send clear, precise and timely work instructions to their employees, provide them with constructive feedback on work performance and use multiple communication channels. Doing so supports the loyalty of the employees and reduces their desire to change jobs. By Malbašić and Brčić (2012), the key role of a manager is to communicate the values and mission of the organization to the employees. Thanks to this communication of values, the managers influence the behaviour of employees and belonging to the organization.

Australien Institut of Management (2012) states: “Supervision of staff working flexibly requires managers to take an explicit focus on objectives, outcomes or outputs, rather than activities or inputs. For example, taking the stated objectives of the organisation as a whole, the

manager may identify specific objectives for each staff member to achieve within agreed timeframes.“ **The fifth flexibility tool** in our research is based on this statement.

These nine flexibility tools are divided into two groups according to the focus on strengthening the autonomy or supervision, as mentioned above. Regarding the tool of "mandatory time that the employee must spend at workplace discussing information to the colleagues who substitute for the employee during their absence from the workplace"; it is not clear whether it is a tool that strengthens the autonomy of the employer or a tool for the supervision. Work meetings might be used for keeping the employee in touch with the corporate culture, and with the team-mates. The meeting might take place in the spirit of coordinating the activities of team members, in which the autonomy is built in and strengthened at the same time. At the same time, however, it might be managed in a directive way by the determination of the tasks and their control by the superior.

Regarding the employees with a high degree of self-management and self-motivation to complete the task, it is appropriate to use the tools that strengthen the employee's autonomy, such as offering confidence and creating the conditions for completing the task. Such employees with a high degree of self-management and self-motivation are supposed to be demotivated by the use of the supervisory tools controlling and reducing the autonomy, reducing their creativity and willingness to self-management.

On the other hand, regarding the employees with a low degree of self-management and self-motivation to complete the tasks, it is appropriate to consider the inclusion of the direct control. Gilbert (2013) offers 17 factors that affect the degree of appropriateness of the use of autonomy in leadership. He also reports that the management are able to create environments with high levels of autonomy whilst simultaneously retaining high levels of control.

Decentralization of power and participatory management with a higher degree of autonomy entrusted to the employees are recommended to increase the degree of innovation in organizations (Gebert et al., 2003). Gilbert et al. (2017) show in their research that promoting the autonomy of the employees increases their mental health and is prevention against burnout. That is why the research in the paper distinguishes between the tools that are aimed at strengthening the autonomy and those that focus on supervision and direct management of the employees. The person who helps SMEs to implement FWA should inform the managers about the advantages and the threats of all flexibility tools including the information about the autonomy entrusting.

One of the impetus for conducting the research was the fact that in the Czech Republic, flexible working arrangements are little used compared to the average of the European Union. According to Eurostat (2020), in 2019 the share of shorter working hours in total working hours in the Czech Republic amounted to 6.2%, compared to 18.5% in the 28 EU countries on average; 46.8%, in the Netherlands; 27.5% in Austria and 27.2% in Germany. The aim of the research was to find out what flexibility tools should be offered to the managers to reduce their concerns associated with more frequent use of flexible working arrangements, and thus contribute to more frequent use of flexible types of jobs in the Czech Republic.

The paper discusses the intensity of the use of the tools as described above in connection with the intensity of the use of flexible working arrangements, in connection with the characteristics of a responsible manager and in connection with the use of specific types of flexible working arrangements.

Following the results of the research, the managers are supposed to find out what flexibility tools are used by the organizations using flexible working arrangements. They will also learn what tools are avoided by such organization avoid. The paper offers the answers to the following research questions:

- Does the number of possible flexible jobs correspond to the number of flexibility tools used by the managers for work flexibility?
- Does the use of the tools of flexibility correspond to any of the personality traits of the manager?
- Does the use of flexible working arrangements correspond to the use of the flexibility tools?

The research was realised before the COVID-19 time. During COVID-19 there are new experiences with FWA, especially with home-office. It's important to underline there are many differences between FWA enforced by COVID-19 and FWA provided as an advantage for employees. This article focuses on FWA provided as a bonus for employees. Differences between home office enforced by COVID-19 and home office provided as an advantage for employees are very clearly described by Waizenegger, L., McKenna, B. et al. (2020). The authors underline the differences as taking of multiple roles (e.g., employee, teacher, cleaner, cook), little time to plan and prepare mentally, increased stress levels. The results of the research should be used after the COVID-19 time, not immediately in the hight pandemic situation.

Management in SMEs

The desire to implement FWA and to use flexibility tools in SMEs is related to the attention which is focused on human resource management (Williams, 2019). Milosevic et al. (2019) researches the reasons for the factors of the failure of the SMEs in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and the Republic of Serbia. One of the reasons was the lack of management attention to human resource architecture. Maršíková et al. (2019) did a research of human resources management in one region of 5 countries – the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, United Kingdom. They found out that: “The most important HRM activities for SMEs in the Liberec region were identified by respondents as employee selection process, recruitment and reward management.” More than 20% of SMEs in Liberec region don't use the HRM activity “career management”. Fast 10% of these respondents don't use the HRM activity “Employee satisfaction and engagement” which are important for the desire to implement FWA and the use of flexibility tools.

The flexibility tools cannot bring infectivity into the SMEs. Searching these tools as the potential power for increasing the number of jobs with flexibility must be based on contribution for the SMEs's results. One of the flexibility tools focused in this research is “responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term”. The research found out that it is the most used tool of SMEs who apply FWA. Sull et al. (2018) warns about necessity to align the goals with strategic priorities and to account for critical interdependencies across all firm's activities and to enable course corrections as circumstances change. It is important to make goals FAST – frequently discussed, ambitious, specific (translated into concrete metrics and milestones), transparent. Vrchota et al. (2019) state: “Project management has already become common practice in managing the processes of Western countries. In the Czech Republic, project management is still looking for a place in the management styles.” The research of Vrchota et al. showed that only about 70% SMEs in the Czech Republic use project management. Almamlook (2018) found out that project failure could be avoided by paying careful attention to the project management success criteria and by assessing the success during the lifecycle of the project, not only at the end of the project. This is important not only for the flexibility tool “responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term” but also for the flexibility tool “mandatory supervisory meetings with the superior, during which it is checked whether the employee continuously performs the tasks” and “the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period following the next meeting”. As reported by Horáková, Stejskalová and Škapová (2000), a set of corporate goals is a sort of a jigsaw puzzle. The management of an

enterprise has all its pieces, and they know what the overall picture should look like. When we get a single piece of the puzzle, we don't know what to do with it. When we put together a puzzle, it helps us to: 1) know the whole picture; 2) we know that each piece of the puzzle has its precisely defined place and is indispensable for the whole. This information of the above-mentioned authors is all the more important if the worker works part-time, their working hours are different from the working hours of other team-mates or even they work from home. All the more it is necessary to pay attention to the knowledge of the overall "picture", knowledge of the context and connections to other team-mates and the processes in the organization. The person trying to implement flexible tools at SMEs should train managers to communicate about the tools like about the parts of jigsaw puzzle which are important for understanding the whole picture.

Managerial communication in telework increases the demands on accuracy and thoughtfulness. The manager does not have the opportunity to pop in the next office and change the instruction, does not have the opportunity to explain the incorrect understanding of the assigned task during its performance, cannot run out into the hallway and convene an operational meeting within half an hour. The objectives must be clearly formulated, tasks precisely specified, the relevant time frame clearly stated and the connection to the following steps explained. Allen and Fustefeld (1974) measured that if the distance between co-workers increased to more than 30 meters, the number of their contacts would drop to zero. Bergun (2009) notices that in avoidance the "out of sight, out of mind" phenomenon, it is important to know, that manager and the teleworker both have the responsibility to initiate communication through discussion and problem-solving. The intensity of communication between the inter-manager and the teleworker should be such that the teleworker should always feel part of the organizational culture of the office. The manager needs to know if the teleworker is satisfied, so they need to listen, be attentive to weak signals and express empathy.

Flexibility tools related to using informational communication technologies are very important for implementing FWA but at the same time they are important for leading the SME. Security of using ICT is very important. Douchek et al. (2020) analyses data from SMEs in the Czech Republic and in Slovak. The results show that the biggest problem of today's Czech SMEs are "operation security" (to ensure correct and secure operations of information processing facilities, to ensure that information and information processing facilities are protected against malware, to protect against loss of data, to record events and generate

evidence, to ensure the integrity of operational systems, to prevent exploitation of technical vulnerabilities, to minimise the impact of audit activities on operational system) and “compliance” (to avoid breaches of legal, statutory, regulatory or contractual related to information security and of any security requirements, to ensure that information security is implemented and operated in accordance with the organisational policies and procedures). Heidt et al. (2019) states that there are the presence of skilled workforce, documented IT processes and IT-budget planning underdeveloped in SMEs which is the reason why the IT security at SMEs is lower than at large enterprises.

2. Research Data and Methods

Aim of the paper

The results of the analysis of the dependence of managerial personal traits and the use of the flexibility tools is useful for the educational, consulting and awareness organizations in the education of managers in organizations implementing flexible forms of work. The aim of this article is to assess the use of flexibility tools under flexible working arrangements in the small and medium-sized employers in the service industry in the region of South Bohemia and suggest some practical arrangements supporting the work of consultants and HR specialists who try to increase the number of flexible jobs in South Bohemia. The tertiary sector was targeted because there are most possibilities to use some forms of FWA (Trexima, 2017). In relation to the research questions and in relation to the actually academic literature (the link between research questions and existing academic articles is described in the chapter Literature research), the following hypotheses are tested:

- H1: The more different flexibility tools are used by the managers, the more flexible jobs they offer.
- HA₁: It is not true that the more different flexibility tools are used by the managers, the more flexible jobs they offer.
- H2: At least one of the personality traits of a manager affects the intensity of the use of a particular flexibility tool.
- HA₂: It is not true that at least one of the personality traits of a manager affects the intensity of the use of a particular flexibility tool.

- H3: If at least one specific type of flexible working arrangements (shorter working hours, working from home or flexible working hours) is used, at least one of the offered flexibility tools is used more often than other researched flexibility tools.
- HA₃: It is not true that when using at least one specific type of flexible working arrangements (shorter working hours, working from home or flexible working hours) at least one of the offered flexibility tools is used more often.

Methods

The data was gathered in the framework of the research that was carried out from November 2018 till October 2019. A questionnaire survey was carried out with 100 employers working in the services sector who employ more than 2 and less than 250 employees in South Bohemia regardless of their strategy or types of working positions. The core business was limited only by the services sector which is useful because of the more frequented possibility to use FWA (TREXIMA, 2017).

There were represented 53 micro-sized and 47 medium-sized employers from South Bohemia, in the survey. There were total 14,901 enterprises employing 1-249 employees in South Bohemia in 2019 (Czech Statistical Office, 2020), of which approx. 60% are active in services and education (Czech Statistical Office, 2020). Sample consisted of randomly selected 60% of these employers (8,941). Response rate of this research is ca. 1.12% (100/8,941).

The employers were contacted by the interviewer and were made aware of the importance of the research. The managers influencing the HR policy of the organization (usually the executives and HR directors) were contacted and the questionnaire was always filled in by them. The questionnaires were filled in within the online platform of Survio.com. Within the questionnaire, the semi-open questions were asked, where the respondent chose the answer from several proposed options and also they had the opportunity to add their own answer under the designation "other".

There were questions from 4 different areas:

- 1) Questions for identification of the size and the field of activity of the respondent (how many employers do you have? What's the field of activity of your business?)
- 2) Questions for identification of the characteristic of the respondent (age, level of education, gender, siblings, children)
- 3) Questions for identification of the use of FWA (share of employees working under FWA - telework, flexible working hours, part-time)

- 4) Questions for identification of the use of flexibility tools (the respondents had the possibility to choose the flexibility tools they really use in practice even if used for a single employee).

The data was analysed using Pearson test, Spearman's correlation coefficient (to determine the relation between the number of flexibility tools used and the number of flexible jobs offered) and one-dimensional and

three-dimensional logit regression (to determine the dependence of the traits of the managers on the tools for flexibility and further to determine the dependence between the types of flexible working arrangements used and the use of specific tools for flexibility). The number of valid analysis cases was 100 in all cases. Significance level $\alpha = 0.05$.

3. Results

At the Significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, a positive correlation between the number of the flexibility tools and the number of jobs with flexible working arrangements is proved by Pearson test; Spearman coefficient $\Rightarrow 0.4109366$. Table 1 shows points for using FWA in every particular SME. There were 100 SMEs. The more flexibility tools are used by the organizations, the more jobs with flexible working arrangement is offered.

Table 1: Number of Jobs with FWA and Number of Flexibility Tools*)

Points for using FWA in every SME	Flexibility tools **)								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
13					1				
8			1		1		1		
7		1			1				
4									
7		1	1		1		1		1
2									
10					1		1		
2			1		1				
10	1		1			1	1		
5		1	1	1	1		1	1	1
9		1	1		1	1	1		
1								1	
6					1	1			
3									
2						1	1		1
3									
9		1	1			1	1	1	1
0									
2									
15					1	1	1		
1			1						
3									
9					1		1		1
4									
11			1			1	1		
1					1				
5									
2									
15	1		1	1	1		1		
5			1		1				

Points for using FWA in every SME	Flexibility tools **)								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
7		1	1	1	1				
10		1	1						
4	1								
8			1	1	1		1		
5									1
2	1		1	1	1	1			
4		1	1				1		
5									
10	1								
8	1		1		1				
13						1			
2				1					
6							1		
2									
6			1						
1			1						
10		1	1		1				
10	1								
7	1		1	1	1	1	1		
15	1		1		1				
11	1		1		1			1	
15		1	1		1		1		
9			1	1	1		1		
5		1	1						
5		1	1	1					1
1									
2							1		
10									
0									
2		1			1		1		
0					1				
1		1	1	1			1		
8	1		1		1				
0									
3	1								
6									
6	1		1	1	1	1	1		
5		1	1		1		1		1
15		1	1		1				
4	1		1	1					
5									
1									
4			1		1	1	1		
4		1	1	1	1				1
8	1			1	1				
11	1	1			1	1	1		1
8						1			
4	1			1	1				
3		1	1		1				
4					1			1	
15	1	1	1	1	1				
6		1							
9	1		1		1				
10									
4			1						
15	1				1	1			1
1			1		1				
0		1	1						
12					1		1		
9					1				
15		1	1		1				
3								1	
15									
5									
15	1		1	1	1		1		
15		1	1		1		1		
1									
0									
6									
5					1				

Source: Analysis of questionnaire data

*) If number 1 in column of Flexibility tools the particular tool is used in the SME.

***) Flexibility tools: A - remote internet access to the complete information, B - remote internet access only to certain parts of the information system, as needed by the employee, C – company mobile phone, D - the employee's

obligation to answer all work-related telephone calls and e-mails no later than an internally set deadline, E - responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term, F - the obligation to regularly submit an overview of the activities that the employee engaged in during the work activity, G - the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period following the next meeting, H - mandatory time that the employee must spend at workplace transferring information to the colleagues who substitute for the employee during their absence from the workplace, I - mandatory supervisory meetings with the superior, during which it is checked whether the employee continuously performs the tasks.

Using the logit analysis, a statistically significant positive relation is found between the presence of childcare of the manager and the provision of a company phone to an employee working within the flexible working arrangements. A statistically significant positive dependence is also proved between the gender of the manager and the responsibility for the independent solution of projects / tasks within a pre-agreed term. The men give such responsibility to their subordinates significantly more often than the women.

Furthermore, it is shown that the higher the level of education a manager has, the more likely they require the employees working under flexible working arrangement to attend regular meetings, during which the employees are given a clear assignment for the period following the meeting. Statistically significant dependence in this analysis is also demonstrated only for the position in the family in which the manager was born and the tools of flexible working arrangements, related to the need for direct supervision of the employees (obligation to answer all business phone calls and e-mails no later than agreed, obligation to submit regularly an overview of the activities, the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period following the meeting). Older siblings in the position of manager more often than younger siblings demand direct supervision of the employees under flexible working arrangements. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis at the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 2: Personal traits of a manager in relation to flexibility tools*)

	Gender	Age	Education	Child-care	Position as a child within the family
remote internet access to the complete information system	0.022	0.466	0.425	0.115	0.126
remote internet access only to certain parts of the information system, as needed by the employee	0.425	0.993	0.581	0.869	0.730
company mobile phone	0.826	0.147	0.016	0.049	0.225
the employee's obligation to answer all work-related telephone calls and e-mails no later than an internally set deadline	0.688	0.277	0.072	0.211	0.044
responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term	0.044	0.3	0.194	0.266	0.223
the obligation to regularly submit an overview of the activities that the employee engaged in during the work activity	0.834	0.112	0.072	0.211	0.047
the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period following the next meeting	0.381	0.361	0.049	0.053	0.047
mandatory time that the employee must spend at workplace transferring information to the colleagues who substitute for the employee during their absence from the workplace	0.209	0.384	0.359	0.542	0.997
mandatory supervisory meetings with the superior, during which it is checked whether the employee continuously performs the tasks	0.674	0.476	0.194	0.539	0.224

Source: Analysis of questionnaire data

*)The light grey boxes indicate the variables with a statistically significant dependence.

Using the logit analysis, data expressing the use of tools related to flexible working arrangements in the organizations and the intensity of the use of specific flexible working

arrangements are further tested; in this case: shorter working hours (part-time), working from home, flexible working hours.

The analysis shows a statistical dependence between the fact that the organization allows employees to work from home and using all the following flexibility tools: remote internet access to the complete information system; remote internet access only to certain parts of the information system, as needed by the employee; company mobile phone; and the responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term.

The dependence of allowing work from home is not proved for the following flexibility tools: the employee's obligation to answer all work-related telephone calls and e-mails no later than an internally set deadline; the obligation to regularly submit an overview of the activities that the employee engaged in during the work activity; the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period following the next meeting; mandatory time that the employee must spend at workplace discussing information to the colleagues who substitute for the employee during their absence from the workplace; mandatory supervisory meetings with the superior, during which it is checked whether the employee continuously performs the tasks.

Table 3: Flexibility tools in relation to different flexible working arrangements*)

	Part-time	Work from home	Flexible working hours
remote internet access to the complete information system	0.180	0.009	0.756
remote internet access only to certain parts of the information system, as needed by the employee	0.198	0.034	0.872
company mobile phone	0.206	0.049	0.311
the employee's obligation to answer all work-related telephone calls and e-mails no later than an internally set deadline	0.405	0.341	0.876
responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term	0.312	0.041	0.215
the obligation to regularly submit an overview of the activities that the employee engaged in during the work activity	0.612	0.192	0.987
the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period following the next meeting	0.028	0.556	0.435
mandatory time that the employee must spend at workplace transferring information to the colleagues who substitute for the employee during their absence from the workplace	0.704	0.845	0.451
mandatory supervisory meetings with the superior, during which it is checked whether the employee continuously performs the tasks	0.578	0.329	0.379

Source: Author

*)The light grey boxes indicate the variables with a statistically significant dependence.

All tested hypotheses are proved.

- H1: The more different flexibility tools are used by the managers, the more flexible jobs they offer.
- HA₁: It is not true that the more different flexibility tools are used by the managers, the more flexible jobs they offer.

H1 is valid at the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. A statistical dependence is, proved between a number of flexibility tools and flexible jobs. Spearman's correlation coefficient = 0.4109366.

- H2: At least one of the personality traits of a manager affects the intensity of the use of a particular flexibility tool.
- HA₂: It is not true that at least one of the personality traits of a manager affects the intensity of the use of a particular flexibility tool.

H2 is valid. With the help of logit analysis, a statistically significant positive dependence between the following personal traits of the manager and specific flexibility tools is shown:

- education type/ company mobile phone – the higher education of the manager, the more frequent possibility to use of company mobile phone;
- child-care presence/ company mobile phone – the managers taking care for a child/children provide to the employee working on FWA the company mobile phone more often than managers who don't take care for a child/children;
- position as a child in the family/ obligation to answer all work-related telephone calls and e-mails no later than an internally set deadline – managers who are older siblings give more often the obligation to answer all work-related telephone calls and e-mail no later than an internally set deadline;
- gender/responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects and tasks in a pre-agreed term – managers men provide more often the responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects and tasks in a pre-agreed term than managers women do;
- position as a child in the family / obligation to regularly submit an overview of the activities that the employee engaged in during the work activity - managers who are older siblings asks more often for regular submit an overview of the activities that the employee engaged in during the work activity;

- position as a child in the family / the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period until next meeting - managers who are older siblings ask their employees offer for participating in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period until next meeting;

- education type / the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period following the next meeting – the higher the education of the manager is, the more often the obligation to participate in regular meetings is.

- H3: If at least one specific type of flexible working arrangements (shorter working hours, working from home or flexible working hours) is used, at least one of the offered flexibility tools is used more often.
- HA₃: It is not true that when using at least one specific type of flexible working arrangements (shorter working hours, working from home or flexible working hours) at least one of the offered flexibility tools is used more often.

H3 is valid. Using the logit analysis, a statistically significant positive dependence between the following types of flexible working arrangements and specific flexibility tools is proved:

- work from home/remote internet access to the complete information system;
- work from home /remote internet access only to certain parts of the information system, as needed by the employee;
- work from home /company mobile phone;
- work from home/ responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects and tasks in a pre-agreed term;
- shorter working hours/ the obligation to participate in regular meetings, during which the employee receives a clear assignment of tasks for the period until next meeting.

The data also reported other interesting findings beyond the research questions and hypotheses. The surveyed set of 100 enterprises included 27 enterprises that do not use any flexibility tool under flexible working arrangements. Of these 27 organizations, only four did not allow any form of flexibility to any of the employees. This means that 23% of the surveyed organizations offer flexible working arrangements to their employees, however, they do not use any of the surveyed tools for managerial communication of such arrangements.

4. Discussion

Number of flexibility tools used and number of flexible jobs

Using Pearson test, Spearman correlation coefficient, the dependence of the number of used flexibility tools and the number of flexible jobs in the sample organizations is proved. It is clear that the more flexibility tools organizations are willing and able to implement, the more they create flexible jobs. The flexibility tools are recommended by Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center for Work (2018) for implementation flexible jobs. This result confirmed that flexibility tools chosen according to academic literary sources were well used. This result is in conformity with the literary research. Rice, R.E. (2017) observes: “Most flexwork would be impossible without the use of ICTs” and it is shown the dependence of number of used ICT tools and the number of flexible jobs. Australian Institut of Management (2012) states: “Supervision of staff working flexibly requires managers to take an explicit focus on objectives, outcomes or outputs, rather than activities or inputs.” Implementing flexibility tool “responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term” is important for creating flexible jobs.

This result is useable for HR specialists and consultants of non-profit organisations by trying to increase the number of working places with flexibility. They can help SMEs to implement more flexibility tools. Before this it is needed to consider the threats of implementing some flexibility tools:

- remote internet access to the complete information system is limited by the technological, financial and security possibilities of the employer. By the Labour Code, the employer is obliged to provide the employee with work equipment, and to compensate them for the use of their own equipment. In order to access the Internet remotely, it is necessary to provide the employee with computer equipment and an Internet connection, which leads to increased costs. Ensuring data security, both technologically and financially, is also challenging;
- remote internet access only to some parts of the information system, as needed by the employee for work, is limited similarly to unlimited access to the information system, however, it provides a significantly lower burden in ensuring data security;
- providing a company mobile phone is a financial burden for the employer both at the time of the acquisition of the telephone set itself and at the time of payment for telephone and data services. The employers can take advantage of special offers from telephone operators for organizations that have a larger number of SIM cards;

- the employee's obligation to answer all business telephone calls and e-mails no later than in the internally set deadline is not associated with an increase in financial costs. However, in the case of setting an obligation for the employees, it is necessary to control its fulfilment. This control might be time or technologically demanding for the manager. It is very important to set the rules transparently and then follow them. The manager's approach to the mentioned management tool has a significant influence on the corporate culture, and therefore it is necessary to pay due attention to its correct setting.
- the responsibility for the independent solution of the projects and tasks in a pre-agreed term is a purely managerial tool without affecting the financial burden of the organization. It is important that the manager is able to assign the task in a suitable way and then check the result. Web applications and project management software can help, representing a certain financial and technological complexity. Although such flexibility tool may seem trivial, there are many confusing and insufficiently specified assignment of the tasks, the non-completion of the PDCA loop (plan-do-check-act), and 4P's (prepare-perform-perfect-progress), and the manager does not paying enough attention to the whole management process.
- the obligation to regularly submit an overview of the work is time consuming for both the employee and the manager and is not popular with the employees who have difficulty recalling which work activities they were engaged in. It is also difficult for the manager to assess how much time each activity requires, as they are not familiar with the detailed context and operational difficulties associated with the implementation. It is very appropriate for the manager to think in advance to which employees it is appropriate to use this tool. For the employees who are capable of self-management and who work on a given task with a set deadline and submit ongoing results of their work, supervision in the form of submitting an overview of activities can cause a decrease in motivation with a possible negative effect on mutual trust. The use of the tool is limited mainly by the demands on the human resource management;
- the obligation to participate in the meetings, in which the employee is given a clear assignment for the following time, represents an increase in costs only if the organization does not have space to hold meetings and it is forced to rent it. Likewise, if the organization organizes meetings in the form of external meetings and it has to pay the travel costs. Time intensity is clearly a limiting factor of this tool; however, it allows personal meetings of employees, maintaining the corporate culture and participation of

employees in the common goals of the organization. If the meetings are held online, there are only demands on computer technology and the quality of the Internet connection.

- mandatory time that the employee must spend at workplace discussing information to the colleagues who substitute for the employee during their absence from the workplace burdens the organization with additional costs in the range of wage costs when both employees are at the workplace.
- mandatory supervisory meetings with the superior, during which it is checked whether the employee continuously performs the tasks, are related to time costs and demands on managerial communication only.

Is it possible to use the information obtained on the proven dependence between the number of flexibility instruments used and the number of flexible jobs in practice? Yes, it is possible. The information obtained might be used by the consultants of non-profit educational organizations, focusing on raising awareness about the implementation and use of flexible working arrangements. It should be used by the HR managers who try to implement FWA into the human resources architecture because of recruitment qualified employees from the group of mothers, students, handicapped people and young people from Y-generation.

Personal traits of a manager and the tools used

Using the logit analysis, a statistically significant positive dependence between the following characteristics of the manager and specific tools of managerial communication was demonstrated. Is it possible to apply such finding in practice?

- The higher is the education of the manager, the more often they provide a company mobile phone to their employees. Such finding might be used in practice especially by the consultants of educational organizations, who would explain the benefits of providing a mobile phone to an employee to the managers with lower education.
- It is proved that the managers taking care of a child provide a company mobile phone to their employees more often. Again, such finding can be used in practice by the educators, who can help managers who do not care for the child to understand the needs of a worker who needs work flexibility, and a mobile phone will make it easier for them to perform flexible work.

- Finding out that the sibling order in which the manager is born is dependent on the obligation to answer all business telephone calls and e-mails by an internally set deadline at the latest. This finding can be used in practice especially by the managers themselves. They receive feedback that first-born siblings in the role of managers more often emphasize direct supervision of the employees. It is up to them to consider whether they support the efficient running of processes with this approach or whether they use it to create space for mistrust.
- The research shows that men more often than women as the managers assign their subordinates the responsibility for dealing with the projects and tasks independently in a pre-arranged time. Such information is useful in education and is also important for the managers themselves. It is necessary to explain to the women the benefits of giving responsibility and teach them the correct procedure for such activity.
- The managers born as first-born siblings are more often obliged to submit to their subordinates a regular overview of the activities they engaged in during their work activity than the managers born as younger siblings. Likewise, the first-born managers are more likely to request regular meetings to assign assignments for the following period. Such finding is very interesting from a psychological point of view; however, from the point of view of managerial communication in practice it does not find a higher degree of applicability. However, it can be used, for example, in coaching the managers, in which managers try to reveal the reasons for their managerial approach and the way of managerial communication.
- It is proved that the higher is the education of the manager, the more often they report using the tool of the obligation to participate in the meetings, in which the employee is given a clear assignment for the following. Such finding might be used in several areas. It is useful for those interested in flexible forms of work who can easily offer a participation in meetings and related handover of tasks to a university-educated manager. When dealing with a manager with a lower education, they may assume that the use of meetings as a tool for managerial communication in flexible forms of work is not a popular activity and they prefer to focus on other options. On the other hand, the educators can explain the benefits of the meetings to managers with lower education; teach them effective management of meetings, which will then be beneficial for them.

Types of flexible working arrangements and the tools

Using the logit analysis, a statistically significant positive dependence between different types of flexible working arrangements and specific flexibility tools is proved. It reports that the employers who allow their employees to work from home to a greater extent than other interviewed employers, more often provide the employees with a company mobile phone, remote internet access to the complete information system or at least some parts of the information system and they more often demand responsibility for the projects and tasks at a pre-arranged date.

When implementing home-office in SMEs, it is important to include such aspects and also take them into account in the corporate budget and in the internal security processes. This is a practical finding beneficial especially for the small and medium-sized employers before introducing home-office.

Furthermore, it is reported that the employers, who allow their employees shorter working hours more often than other employers, are more likely to request participation in regular meetings, during which the employees are given a clear assignment for the tasks for the following period. This is a finding that is very well applicable in practice in the management of part-time workers. The finding is also useful for the educators seeking more frequent offer of shorter working hours. And it is also useful for those interested in shorter working hours.

Absence of using the tools

As reported above, the statistics shows interesting relations between the variables in the analysis. However, it is also useful to discuss some of the absolute values found for the variables. As shown, 23% of the surveyed organizations that offers flexible working arrangements to their employees do not use any of the surveyed flexibility tools of the flexible working arrangements.

The enterprises implementing flexible working arrangements for certain jobs and at the same time not implementing the necessary tools for the arrangements inevitably encounter negative phenomena accompanying unprofessionally implemented flexible working arrangements (such as low labour productivity, late delivery of completed tasks, communication noise, absence of an employee at the workplace when needed by the team-mates). They then only allow flexible arrangements to employees for whom they are absolutely sure of a high level of self-management.

Using tools of autonomy and supervision

The result of the research is also the finding that the tools associated with strengthening autonomy compared to the tools linked to direct supervision of the employee are used significantly more often in the following flexible working arrangements. The research was carried out among the employers with up to 250 employees, mostly in the region of South Bohemia. It would be interesting to find out the effect of the size of the employer on the results, i.e. whether the large enterprises would show similar results.

There are some limits of the results. The survey was carried out in a specific setting – SMEs from South Bohemia providing services. The results can be applied only in this area. Not all SMEs from South Bohemia providing services who want to implement FWC can use all the results – the possibility of using depends on the particular line of business, the organisation structural and the strategy which SME use. The use of results is needed to be considered by the managers of every single of SME. Response rate of this research is ca. 1.12% which can be a limitation for the using of the results too.

5. Final Conclusions

The paper discussed the way and intensity of the flexibility tools related to flexible working arrangements (FWA). As reported by the results, the “responsibility for independent fulfilment of the projects / tasks in a pre-agreed term” is the most common flexibility tool under the flexible working arrangements. On the other hand, the “mandatory time that the employee must spend at workplace discussing information to the colleagues who substitute for the employee during their absence from the workplace” is the least common flexibility tool.

More than 67% of the interviewed employers, using the flexible working arrangements for their employees to the maximum extent (10 - 15 points for flexibility), ask for the responsibility for the independent fulfilment of the tasks in a pre-agreed term. Regarding the interviewed employers, using FWA to their employees to a low extent (0 - 4 points for flexibility), only less than 30% require responsibility for the independent fulfilment of tasks in a predetermined period. The research shows that some flexibility tools are underused and therefore share concerns about the introduction of the flexible working arrangements. It is also reported that the managers with certain specified characteristics do not make sufficient use of the specific flexibility tools, or they overuse them on the other hand.

It is proved that 23% of the surveyed organizations, which have experience in enabling flexible working arrangements for their employees, do not use any of the flexibility tools of the arrangements.

The most frequently used tool of managerial communication related to flexible working arrangements is the responsibility for the independent solution of the projects and tasks within a pre-agreed term (used by 47% of the respondents and used by 67% of the respondents who using the FWA for their employees to the maximum extent). The hypothesis was confirmed that the more jobs offered by the employer within the flexible arrangements, the more flexibility tools are used.

Some flexibility tools are more often used by managers with specific characteristics. A very interesting finding is related to the fact that the managers from the survey's target group who were born at first birth are more likely than the "younger siblings" to use the tools of direct supervision (submission of a work report, obligation to attend meetings to take over tasks and control the fulfilment of tasks), while the managers born as "younger siblings" use the tools that strengthen the autonomy of the employees (assignment of responsibility for independent fulfilment of the task, remote access to the information system) more often compared to the first-born. An equally interesting finding is that the men assign to their subordinates the responsibility for performing tasks independently in a predetermined time more often than the women. When implementing FWA, it is very important that the management carefully considers the implementation of each of the proposed flexibility tools and assesses its suitability for the specific flexible form of work introduced and for the corporate culture. The tools need to be transparently incorporated into organizational procedures and communicated so that they are used to increase the motivation of the employees to provide quality work performance. It is appropriate to explain the advantages and disadvantages of the opposite approach to managers who belong to groups with a tendency to promote or not enforce specific flexibility tools.

If the employers in South Bohemia are inspired by the employers in states where FWA are used significantly more (Germany, Austria, France, Scandinavia, etc.), and if they decide that they want to offer quality-of-life working conditions for the employees of mothers of young children, students, people with disabilities and Generation Y workers (people born in years 1983-1997 who are an important group at labour market these days and who are characterized by a desire for more time flexibility as noticed by Rezlerová (2009)), or if they realize that flexible working arrangements are ideal for coping with the current situation on the labour market (lack of qualified workers, the need to work in a home-office, high morbidity of workers, a high proportion of workers caring for a loved one, Industry 4.0), then it careful introduction

of as many flexibility tools as possible is recommended, especially those that have worked well for the employers who provide the largest number of jobs under the flexible working arrangements. Implementing of FWA and flexibility tools is needed to be transparently communicated in the SME. Čarvašová et al. (2020) states: “Although 28% of SMEs surveyed perceive the FWC as the possibility of attracting qualified employees, only 14% of the respondents reported a transparent manner in which the FWC are offered to employees.” The person who trains employers how to implement FWA (personalists, consultants of non-profit organisations, staffer of public institutions) should inform not only about the necessity to implement flexibility tools but it should inform about the effective way how should the managers transparent communicate the tool’s and their importance.

The appropriate employees should be selected to be able to work with flexible working arrangements and then given responsibility for carrying out the projects and tasks independently at a pre-determined time, provided a company mobile phone and remote access to the information system to the extent necessary for efficient work.

The modern trend of human resources is to build diverse teams that benefit from the diversity of differently members. The teams that are diverse take advantage of the strengths and opportunities not only of unilaterally educated white men of productive age, but also of women workers, older people, juniors, and people with different views and experiences. Such employees have different needs in terms of place of work, time they can spend on employment, schedule of working hours. If the organization creates suitable working conditions for them and pays attention to leadership, it has created excellent starting conditions for becoming a modern employer that benefits from diverse teams.

The paper discusses a rare profile topic of the flexibility tools for the management of flexible working arrangements. This is a seemingly marginal issue. According to the Pareto principle, however, it is possible to suggest that attention be paid to this marginal issue in the management of the organization.

As shown by the current working experience, the use of flexible arrangements in emerging situations is essential. At the time of the epidemic, when the Government of the Czech Republic in 2020 and 2021 recommended to the enterprises that their employees should work from home and forced a significant proportion of working women to attend home education and not go to work as part of caring for a family member, there is an advantage for the organizations that introduced flexible working arrangements before. Other organizations that applied flexible arrangements rapidly without any systematic approach, gained a number of negative experiences. The quality and systematic implementation of the flexible working

arrangements, the elimination of discrepancies resulting from the ill-considered and rapid implementation in times of emergency will be a very current challenge for the employers in the South Bohemia in 2022. There is a challenge to research the same topic at the same target group of enterprises after the pandemic time and find out about the development of flexibility tools in flexible working conditions applied by South Bohemian SMEs.

The new findings are important for education and training the managers of SMEs providing services in South Bohemia who try to implement FWC in their firms. They can decide which of tools are acceptable for their strategy. The consultants and coaches of this managers can help to eliminate some impact of manager's characteristics which defend to implement the flexibility tools.

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